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Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 061264
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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 061264

FOLLOWING REPEAT SEOUL 2131 ACTION SECSTATE INFO SECDEF JCS CINCPAC TOKYO 16 MAR 1977.

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 2131

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MILI MARR KS US
SUBJ: PRESS REPORTS ROKG WILL SEEK OPCON

1. KOREA TIMES MARCH 15 REPORTS THE ROKG HAS STARTED WORKING ON TRANSITION MEASURES TO ADAPT THE NATION'S DEFENSE STRUCTURE TO THE PHASEOUT OF U.S. GROUND FORCES, TO INCLUDE TAKING OVER OPERATIONAL CONTROL OF THE ENTIRE DEFENSE FORCES OF KOREA FROM THE UN COMMANDER. THE STORY, ATTRIBUTED TO "INFORMED SOURCES," ADDS THAT ESTABLISHMENT OF A JOINT OPERATIONS HEADQUARTERS IS BEING CONSIDERED TO COORDINATE ACTIVITIES OF THE KOREAN ARMED FORCES AND THE U.S. FORCES IN KOREA WHILE THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE U.S. GROUND FORCES IS UNDERWAY. IT FURTHER NOTES THAT "THE TRANSITION WILL ALSO ENTAIL THE RESTRUCTURING OF THE MILITARY ARMISTICE COMMISSION...".

2. THE KOREA TIMES ALSO REPORTS THAT THE ROKG PLAN IS EXPECTED TO BE PRESENTED TO THIS YEAR'S KOREA-U.S.
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PAGE 02 STATE 061264

SECURITY CONSULTATIVE MEETING, WHICH THE STORY SAYS THE ROKG "INTENDS TO HOLD IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE YEAR."

3. STORY (WHICH WE UNDERSTAND COMES FROM MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE SOURCES) CARRIED IN KOREA TIMES' SISTER PUBLICATION, HANKUK ILBO, BUT NOT IN OTHER PRESS. TONGA ILBO MARCH 14 CARRIED LESS ELABORATE STORY PRESENTED

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LARGELY AS REPORTER'S SPECULATION REGARDING NECESSITY FOR CHANGE IN COMMAND ARRANGEMENTS, WHILE LEAVING ARMISTICE SYSTEM UNCHANGED. JOONGANG EDITORIAL WRITER ON MARCH 12 ALSO RECOMMENDED TRANSFER OF OPCON IF U.S. TROOPS WITHDRAWN.

4. MND SUH AND STAFF DIRECTOR ROK/JCS LT. GENERAL YU PYONG-HYON HAVE IN RECENT DAYS QUESTIONED CINCUNC AND CHARGE RESPECTIVELY ABOUT U.S. INTENTIONS WITH REGARD TO COMMAND ARRANGEMENTS. NEITHER SUH NOR YU SPECIFICALLY LAID OUT ROK POSITION BUT THEIR QUESTIONS PLUS ROK EXPRESSIONS ON SUBJECT OF OPCON AT PAST SCMS SUGGEST THAT THESE NEWS ARTICLES HAVE CONSIDERABLE SUBSTANCE. ACCORDINGLY, WE INTERPRET ARTICLES AS INITIAL SIGNAL OF OFFICIAL ROK VIEWS THAT THERE IS BOTTOM LINE ON U.S. TROOP WITHDRAWAL BELOW WHICH ROKS INTENDS TO DEMAND TRANSFER OF OPCON. STERN UNQUOTE VANCE

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